

RECOGNIZING NANCY PASQUALINO
OF SPRING HILL, FLORIDA

HON. GINNY BROWN-WAITE

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Nancy Pasqualino of Hernando County, Florida. Nancy has done something that all of us strive to do, but that very few of us will ever accomplish, celebrate her 101st birthday.

Nancy was born May 12, 1907 in Brooklyn, New York. Coming from a loving family, Nancy grew up and attended school in Brooklyn. She did not get married or have any children, but she did have a long career as a bookkeeper and office manager at Gucci Shops on 5th Avenue in New York City. While she has not met any famous people in her life, Nancy said she and her sister Connie are second cousins to Mother Theresa.

Living in Hernando County with Connie, Nancy says that the beautiful weather is what drew her to this area of Florida. Still active in the community, she is still driving her car and has recently renewed her driver's license. She enjoys the company of her sister and likes to read literature. Nancy's advice to young people today is that they should always listen to their parents.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you join me in honoring Nancy Pasqualino for reaching her 101st birthday. I hope we all have the good fortune to live as long as her.

BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, during the period November 10–November 18, I led a bipartisan House delegation to NATO Parliamentary Assembly, NPA, meetings in Valencia, Spain and to additional meetings in Rome and Florence, Italy. The co-chair of the NPA delegation was the Hon. JOHN SHIMKUS. The delegation also included, Representatives JO ANN EMERSON, DENNIS MOORE, JOHN BOOZMAN, BARON HILL, KENDRICK MEEK, CHARLES MELANCON, CAROLYN MCCARTHY, MELISSA BEAN, JEFF MILLER, MIKE ROSS, DAVID SCOTT and staff. The NPA delegation had a highly successful trip in which a wide range of political, economic and security issues on NATO's agenda, as well as issues involving the U.S.–Italy bi-lateral relationship, were examined.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly, NPA, consists of parliamentarians from all 26 NATO member states. The NPA provides a unique forum for elected officials to analyze and debate issues that the NATO leadership discusses in Brussels. In addition to the 26 member parliaments, parliamentarians from countries such as Russia, Georgia, Croatia, and Afghanistan also participated in the sessions as associate states or observers and engaged in the discussions and debates. Through these sessions, delegates have the opportunity to

learn first-hand the views and concerns that other countries have over the key security issues of the day. An invaluable aspect of the meetings is the chance to meet and come to know members of parliaments who play important roles in their own countries in shaping the security agenda that their governments pursue at NATO. These contacts can endure through a career, and can provide an invaluable private avenue for insights into each ally's particular views on an issue.

As NATO approaches its 60th anniversary summit in April 2009, the key issues on the agenda of the Alliance include the broader issue of the future of NATO and more specific issues including relations with Russia, energy security, missile defense, the conflict in Afghanistan, and emerging threats, such as piracy. Each of these issues was on vigorous display at the NPA meetings. The conflict between Russia and Georgia that played out this past August was the one issue that dominated the Valencia sessions. Many members of the Alliance expressed concern that Russia has begun to implement an increasingly assertive security policy including efforts to intimidate neighboring states, through the threat of force. There was also continued concern that Russia would use its energy supplies as a political lever to influence European policy. It was clear from our meetings that not only the United States and NATO, but the European Union as well, are concerned about Moscow's posture on a wide range of issues. There were, however, differences of opinion over how to structure future relations between NATO and Russia as well as the NPA and the Russian delegates to the Assembly. While the consensus among the delegates was that dialogue between NATO and the NPA and Russia was important and should continue, there were calls for the NPA to take some action against the Russian delegation as a show of displeasure over Russia's conduct in Georgia. As a result, the Assembly, at large, adopted a series of measures limiting, for now, the participation of the Russian delegation. These measures included, among others, the downsizing of the Russian delegation and the suspension of Russian participation in Committee and Sub-committee visits and the Transatlantic Forum.

In addition to these issues, many of the NPA delegates were extremely interested in the outcome of the U.S. Presidential elections and how the incoming administration would conduct relations with Europe in general and with NATO in particular. Questions over the incoming Administration's views on Afghanistan, Iran and missile defense were on everyone's agenda. A highlight of the session was a letter that President-elect Obama had written to outgoing NPA President Jose Lello of Portugal pledging to work with NATO and the NPA during the Obama administration.

Before the opening sessions of the Assembly's plenary the U.S. delegation received a detailed briefing from Ambassador Kurt Volker, the U.S. representative to NATO. He very ably prepared us for the nuances involved in some of the issues that would be debated during the NPA sessions, particularly regarding Russia and whether NATO should offer a Membership Action Plan to Georgia. In addition to the briefing by Ambassador Volker, various members of our delegation held private meetings with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who gave an overview of member

state perspectives on the most controversial issues confronting the alliance; he later addressed the NPA's plenary session. The Foreign Minister of Spain, who also addressed the plenary, briefed several of our Members. And, we met with General Bantz John Craddock, Supreme Allied Commander for Europe who covered a wide range of issues, including the situation in Afghanistan. I also had the opportunity to attend a private meeting with Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia who recounted the August conflict between his country and Russia and what Georgia faces today with respect to reconstruction of the country.

Over two days of the NPA session, intense meetings of the NPA committees took place. There are five NPA committees. In each, parliamentarians presented reports on issues before the alliance. The reports were debated by all members of the committee who often made counter-arguments or suggestions for amending a report. Members of our delegation were present in each committee meeting.

I chaired the Economics and Security Committee, which heard reports on reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, on Russia's economy, and on economic developments in India. Representative BOOZMAN was the co-rapporteur of this last report, which he very ably presented, and which generated an interesting discussion. The Committee also heard an interesting presentation by Rodrigo Rato, former managing director of the International Monetary Fund who spoke on the impact of the current global financial crisis. The Committee also heard from Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, former head of the military command in Afghanistan who spoke on the nexus between security and development in Afghanistan.

The Political Committee heard several reports that touched off sometimes animated debates. Most notable were the reports on NATO's future political agenda and NATO's partnerships that included a lengthy discussion on the recent Russia-Georgia conflict and the future of Georgia's membership in NATO. There were significant differences of opinion on who actually was responsible for starting the war in Georgia and whether to grant Georgia a Membership Action Plan for eventual membership in NATO. U.S. Representative MIKE ROSS was a rapporteur for a report on a possible NATO political engagement with Iran. When Mr. ROSS was unable to present his paper to the Committee, Representative CAROLYN MCCARTHY stepped in and made the presentation. The report was well received. Representative BEN CHANDLER serves as a vice-chairman on this Committee and during the session, Representative CAROLYN MCCARTHY was elected to serve as a Subcommittee vice-chairperson.

The Defense and Security Committee heard two reports on NATO's ongoing operations, including the ISAF mission in Afghanistan and on the contributions non-NATO states were making to NATO operations. The Committee also received a report on NATO's future capability requirements. During the session, the Committee received presentations from the Minister of Defense of Spain, and the Defense Minister of Georgia. Representative TAUSCHER is a vice-chair of one of the Committee's subcommittees.

The Science and Technology Committee heard reports on energy security, reducing global nuclear threats, and on missile defense.

Representative DAVID SCOTT was very engaged on the issue of energy security and was successful in offering three amendments to the resolution proposed on energy and security.

The Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security also heard a report on energy security and the protection of energy infrastructure, along with reports on Kosovo and the future stability in the Balkans, and democracy and security in Central Asia. The Committee also heard presentations on the Balkans and Central Asia.

On Tuesday, the final day of the plenary, the general assembly debated and approved a resolution on relations with Russia. The consensus view was that NATO and Russia should resume their dialogue and continue to find ways to cooperate with each other on critical issues. Also on Tuesday, the Assembly elected new officers to serve during 2009. I had the honor of being elected President of the Assembly and look forward to an interesting and productive year.

Prior to arriving in Valencia for the NPA Plenary, the delegation traveled to Italy on November 10–13 for bi-lateral meetings in Rome and Florence. In Rome, the delegation received a briefing by U.S. Charge d' Affairs, Barbara Leaf and Embassy staff on current relations between Italy and the United States, that continues to be strong. After the briefing, the delegation, in honor of Veterans Day, traveled to the Sicily-Rome Cemetery in the town of Nettuno, just outside the city of Anzio.

During the Second World War, the critical Italian campaign was launched in Sicily and proceeded up the coast of Italy. The delegation visited the resting place of almost 8,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airman who died in the liberation of Sicily and in the landings at Salerno and Anzio. The beautiful cemetery is managed by the U.S. American Battle Monuments Commission. Together, the members of the delegation laid a wreath at the cemetery's central monument, "Brothers in Arms." Members of the delegation also visited individual graves of fallen soldiers from their states to place a rose in memory of those servicemen. This was perhaps the most memorable and poignant moment of the delegation's trip. We were deeply honored to visit the cemetery and want to thank Ron Grosso of the Commission and Joseph Bevilacqua, Cemetery Superintendent, for their hospitality and the fine job they do preserving the memory of those U.S. servicemen who gave their lives in Italy.

Upon our return to Rome, the delegation visited the NATO Defense College for a tour and briefing by the College Commandant, Lt. Gen. Wolf-Dieter Loeser. The College was created in 1951 at the suggestion of General Dwight Eisenhower who argued that military officers from the newly created NATO Alliance "needed an establishment where they could meet and learn to operate together." The Commandant briefed us on the work taking place at the College and the issues currently under discussion in the Fall curriculum. We also had the opportunity to meet several U.S. military personnel attending the Senior Course.

Following the visit to the Defense College, the delegation visited the Italian Ministry of Defense. We were briefed by the Deputy Minister of Defense Crosetto and the head of the Italian General Staff, General Camporini who gave us an overview of the numerous oper-

ations that the Italian military were currently engaged in. Italy has approximately 8,000 troops stationed abroad, including 2,200 in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, 2,500 in Lebanon, and 83 engaged in training the Iraqi National Police. This meeting provided a precise, focused discussion of how Italy is contributing to the global security mission.

Also in Rome, the delegation was hosted at a working lunch by Senator Sergio Di Gregorio, President of the Italian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. We had a very animated discussion on issues ranging from the U.S. presidential elections, to Afghanistan, to Russia and energy security. At the time of our visit, the Italian Senate was in the middle of a debate on their defense budget. With the global economic crisis affecting everyone, Senator Di Gregorio told us that the defense budget for next year would be less than 1 percent of the Italian GDP. As a result, we were told it was unlikely that Italy could do much more in Afghanistan. Following our meeting at the Senate, the delegation met with Mr. Gianni Letta, Under Secretary of the Council of Ministers and close advisor to Prime Minister Berlusconi. Mr. Letta covered a range of issues but spent some time addressing the impact of the global financial crisis on Italy.

On November 13, the delegation traveled to Florence. We were met by U.S. Consul General Mary Ellen Countryman who briefed the delegation on the work the Consulate does in Tuscany and the surrounding region. Tuscany is home to several thousand U.S. citizens, retired, employed, or students studying abroad. While in Florence we also visited the European University Institute which operates a campus comprising doctoral students from all over Europe. We were warmly welcomed by EUI President Yves Menv, faculty and students. A lively discussion followed on the U.S. elections and its impact on transatlantic relations, the differences between the European and U.S. views of the world, and the future role of NATO, relations with Russia, and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our visit to Italy concluded that evening at a dinner hosted by New York University which operates a campus outside Florence for American students studying in Italy. Our dinner was hosted by Ms. Ellyn Toscano, Director of the Campus. Ellyn is no stranger to the House of Representatives where she served for several years as the chief of staff to our colleague, JOSÉ SERRANO.

Madam Speaker, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly provides a unique opportunity for Members of Congress to engage in serious discussions on critical issues with our colleagues from other NATO member states. I believe our delegation, and thus this Congress, benefits greatly from the information we exchange and the personalities we meet during these meetings. I look forward to a very productive Assembly during 2009.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our Embassy staff in Rome and Madrid, our Consular services in Florence and our entire military escort group from the United States Air Force, including the pilots who took us to Europe and back for the NPA sessions. Our diplomatic corps and military personnel provide a quiet but invaluable service in ensuring safety and an efficient schedule for U.S. congressional delegations, and this group of diplomats, servicemen

and women was no exception. I thank them for their hard work and their dedication to duty.

TRIBUTE TO MUNSON'S CHOCOLATES

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Bob Munson and the employees of Munson's Chocolates which is headquartered in Bolton, Connecticut.

During the recent holiday season, I had the privilege of visiting Iraq and Afghanistan with a Congressional Delegation led by Representative GENE TAYLOR of Mississippi and witnessed first hand the important work being done by the men and women of our armed forces. Our group spent time meeting with civilian and military leaders serving on the ground in each country. The holidays are always a difficult time for the men and women of the armed forces as they are away from their loved ones. One of the things that they will tell you makes this time of year a little easier is to enjoy some of the comforts of home.

Thanks to Bob Munson, President of Munson's Chocolates of Bolton, the men and women of the 890th Engineer Battalion and the 926th Engineer Brigade, Multi-National Division currently serving in Baghdad were able to enjoy a sweet reminder of home. A few days before Christmas Congressman TAYLOR arranged for 2,000 pounds of shrimp gumbo to be served to the battalion and Munson's donated almost 600 Connecticut made chocolate bars for dessert. This gift is just another example of the generosity of the Munson family, who for generations has been active supporters of the military community.

The Munson family of employees is no stranger to the heartache families endure while their loved ones are serving overseas. During my visit to the Munson factory, I had the honor of meeting Kay Doherty. Kay's son Stephen recently returned from a tour in Iraq. As Kay can attest, the holidays are an extremely difficult and trying time for military families which is why this generous gift is so timely.

HONORING JADE MOORE, THERE WAS NO BETTER FRIEND OF TEACHERS

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, Pinellas County, Florida lost one of the pillars of our community and our teachers lost their greatest advocate December 16th with the passing of Jade Moore.

Jade served for 34 years as Executive Director of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. In that role, he was the champion for teachers, but he was also the champion for the students they taught.

Jade Moore was a tough but fair negotiator, one who earned the trust and respect of all